

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A method of awarding player tracking points to patrons of a gaming establishment, the method comprising:

(a) determining that a patron has begun an activity for which at least one of player tracking points and comps are accrued;

- 10 (b) during said activity, accruing player tracking points for said patron without said patron initiating a player tracking session; and

(c) awarding said patron player tracking points accrued during said activity.

- 15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the gaming establishment is a casino.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the gaming establishment is a gaming entity comprising a plurality of venues.

- 20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said activity is playing a gaming machine of the gaming establishment.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said activity is playing a game of chance within the gaming establishment.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the accruing of player tracking points begins without receiving player tracking information from the patron.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the patron has a player tracking account with the gaming establishment.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the patron has a player tracking account with the gaming establishment, and wherein the player tracking points are awarded to said patron anonymously, without crediting the patron's player tracking account.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
converting some or all of the awarded player tracking points to at least one of comps, goods and services without crediting any of the player tracking points to a player tracking account.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
storing the awarded player tracking points on a loyalty program instrument.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
crediting the player tracking points stored on the loyalty program instrument to a player tracking account of the patron.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the loyalty point instrument is selected from the group consisting of a smart card, a debit card, a magnetic striped card, a printed ticket, a room key and a portable wireless device.

5 13. The method of claim 1, wherein the activity for player tracking points are accrued occurs in a venue affiliated with the gaming establishment

14. A method of awarding loyalty points to patrons of a gaming establishment, the method comprising:

10 (a) determining that a patron has begun an activity for which loyalty points are accrued;

(b) during said activity, accruing loyalty points for said patron without said patron initiating a loyalty points session; and

(c) awarding said patron loyalty points accrued during said activity.

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15. A method of awarding loyalty points to patrons of a gaming establishment, the method comprising:

determining that a patron has begun an activity for which loyalty points are accrued;

20 accruing loyalty points for said patron during the activity;

awarding to the patron some or all of the loyalty points accrued during said activity; and

issuing to the patron a loyalty program instrument designed or configured to store the awarded loyalty points

25 wherein the loyalty points are awarded to the patron without receiving identification information from the patron.

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16. The method of claim 15, wherein the gaming establishment is a casino.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the gaming establishment is a
5 gaming entity comprising a plurality of venues.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein said activity is playing a gaming
machine of the gaming establishment.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein said activity is playing a game of
10 chance within the gaming establishment.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein said activity is a food purchase, an
entertainment purchase, a transportation purchase, a lodging purchase, a merchandise
15 purchase and a service purchase.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said activity occurs in a venue within
the gaming establishment.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein said activity occurs in a venue
20 affiliated with the gaming establishment.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the venue affiliated with the gaming
establishment is in communication with the gaming establishment via the Internet.

24. The method of claim 15, wherein the loyalty points stored on the
loyalty program instrument are redeemable for at least one of comps, goods and
5 services provided by the gaming establishment.

25. The method of claim 15, wherein a rate at which the patron accrues
loyalty points varies according to one or more of a time of day, days of a week,
months of a year, an amount wagered, a game denomination, a promotional event, a
10 game type and a rate of wagering.

26. The method of claim 15, wherein the accruing of loyalty points begins
without receiving a player tracking card from the patron.

27. The method of claim 15, wherein the accruing of loyalty points begins
without receiving player tracking information from the patron.

28. The method of claim 15, wherein the patron has a player tracking
account with the gaming establishment.

29. The method of claim 15, wherein the patron has a player tracking
account with the gaming establishment, and wherein the accrued loyalty points are
awarded to said patron anonymously, without crediting the patron's player tracking
account.

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30. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

converting some or all of the accrued loyalty points to at least one of goods and services without crediting any of the loyalty points to a player tracking account.

5 31. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

crediting the loyalty points stored on the loyalty point instrument to a player tracking account of the patron.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the loyalty points are credited to the
10 patron's player tracking account using at least one of a phone, a gaming machine, a clerk validation terminal, a cashier station, a casino kiosk, a hand-held wireless device, video display interface in a hotel room and via mail.

33. The method of claim 15, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at
15 least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic striped card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

34. The method of claim 15, wherein the loyalty program instrument is
20 designed or configured to store one or more of prize information, loyalty point information, an establishment, a location, a bar code, a instrument type, an issue date, a validation number, an issue time, an instrument number, an instrument sequence number and a machine number.

35. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

25 redeeming the loyalty points stored on the loyalty point instrument for comps, goods and services using at least one of a phone, a gaming machine, a clerk validation

terminal, a cashier station, a casino kiosk, a hand-held wireless device, a web interface and a video display interface located in a hotel room, and via mail.

36. In a gaming machine, a method of awarding loyalty points to an anonymous game player, the method comprising:

detecting a first gaming event initiated by the game player at the gaming machine;

in response to the first gaming event, accruing loyalty points;

detecting a second gaming event at the gaming machine;

determining an amount of loyalty points accrued between the first gaming event and the second gaming event; and

awarding to the game player some or all of the accrued loyalty points;

issuing to the game player a loyalty program instrument designed or configured to store the awarded loyalty points

wherein the gaming machine issues the loyalty program instrument to the game player without receiving identification information from the game player.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein the loyalty program instrument is designed or configured to store one or more of prize information, loyalty point information, an establishment, a location, a bar code, a instrument type, an issue date, a validation number, an issue time, an instrument number, an instrument sequence number and a machine number.

38. The method of claim 36, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic striped card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

39. The method of claim 36, wherein the first gaming event is one or more of depositing an indicia of credit into the gaming machine, inserting a card into a card reader located on the gaming machine, activating an input button on the gaming machine, inputting a loyalty program instrument into a gaming device on the gaming machine or entering a code into the gaming machine.

40. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
storing information to the loyalty program instrument.

41. The method of claim 36, wherein the second gaming event is detecting zero credits registered on the gaming machine, the gaming machine remaining idle for an amount of time, detecting a tilt condition or detecting an error condition, detecting a game player's request for a loyalty program instrument.

42. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
inputting a first loyalty point instrument into the gaming machine;
determining an amount of loyalty points stored on the first loyalty point instrument;
validating the first loyalty point instrument; and

when the first loyalty point instrument has been validated, adding the loyalty points stored on the loyalty point instrument to an amount of loyalty points awarded to the game player.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein the loyalty point instrument is input into the gaming machine using at least one of a card reader, a wireless interface, a bill validator and a ticket reader.

5 44. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
displaying the awarded amount of loyalty points to the game player.

45. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
10 storing loyalty program transaction information on a memory device located on the gaming machine.

46. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
15 sending loyalty program transaction information to a gaming device located outside of the gaming machine.

47. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
displaying a prize menu wherein the prize menu includes one or more prizes redeemable for an amount of loyalty points;

20 receiving a prize selection selected from the one or more prizes displayed on the prize menu; and

when the amount of loyalty points required to redeem the prize is less than an amount of loyalty points available on the gaming machine,

issuing a loyalty program instrument wherein said loyalty program instrument is used to redeem the selected prize.

48. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

presenting a game play sequence between the first gaming event and the second gaming event wherein said game play sequence includes game play of one or more games.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the one or more games is selected from the group consisting of video slot games, mechanical slot games, video black jack games, video poker games, video keno games, video pachinko games, video card games, video games of chance and combinations thereof.

50. The method of claim 36, wherein a rate at which the player accrues loyalty points varies according to one or more of a time of day, days of a week, months of a year, an amount wagered, a game denomination, a promotional event, a game type and a rate of wagering.

51. The method of claim 36, wherein the loyalty points are accrued without receiving a player tracking card from the game player.

52. The method of claim 36, wherein the loyalty points are accrued without receiving player tracking information from the game player.

53. The method of claim 36, further comprising:
performing a loyal program instrument transaction.

54. The method of claim 36, further comprising

presenting on the gaming machine at least one of a particular game, a particular bonus game, a game feature and a bonus game feature in exchange for an amount of loyalty points redeemed on the gaming machine.

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55. The method of claim 36, wherein said accrued loyalty points are determined by a logic device located on the gaming machine.

56. The method of claim 36, wherein a first gaming machine is designed
10 or configured to communicate loyalty point information to a second gaming machine.

57. The method of claim 56, further comprising:

simultaneously accruing loyalty points on the first gaming machine and the second gaming machine;

15 communicating an amount of loyalty points awarded on the second gaming machine to the first gaming machine;

combining an amount of loyalty points awarded on the second gaming machine with an amount of loyalty points awarded on the first gaming machine; and

20 issuing a loyalty program instrument designed or configured to store the combined awarded loyalty points.

58. In a loyalty program server, a method for performing a loyalty program transaction, the method comprising;

25 receiving a loyalty program validation request from a validation site wherein the loyalty program validation request is used to validate a loyalty program transaction involving a loyalty program instrument;

marking the loyalty program validation request pending;
generating a transaction validation reply;
sending the transaction validation reply to the validation site.

5 59. The method of claim 58, further comprising:

receiving a transaction confirmation from the validation site and marking the
loyalty program transaction complete.

60. The method of claim 58, wherein the loyalty program instrument is
10 designed or configured to store one or more of prize information, loyalty point
information, an establishment, a location, a bar code, a instrument type, an issue date,
a validation number, an issue time, an instrument number, an instrument sequence
number and a machine number.

15 61. The method of claim 58, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at
least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic card, a room key, a portable wireless device
and a smart card.

20 62. The method of claim 58, wherein the validation site is a cashier
station, a casino kiosk, a gaming machine and a hand-held wireless device.

63. The method of claim 58, further comprising:

identifying a gaming device which owns the loyalty program instrument and
sending a validation request to the gaming device.

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64. The method of claim 63, wherein the gaming device is a clerk validation terminal or a gaming machine.

65. The method of claim 58, further comprising:

5 receiving customer identification information;

receiving a loyalty point adjustment request to add loyalty points to a customer account corresponding to the received customer identification information; and

adding loyalty points to the customer account.

10 66. The method of claim 58, further comprising:

receiving customer identification information;

receiving a loyalty point adjustment request to delete loyalty points from a customer account corresponding to the received customer identification information; and

15 deleting loyalty points from the customer account.

67. The method of claim 58, further comprising:

redeeming loyalty points stored on a loyalty program instrument for goods or services.

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68. At a validation site, a method for validating a loyalty point instrument, the method comprising:

receiving a loyalty program instrument;

sending a loyalty program validation request to a loyalty program server wherein the loyalty program validation request contains information stored on the loyalty program instrument;

5 receiving a transaction validation reply from the loyalty program server;

when the loyalty point instrument is validated, sending a transaction confirmation to the loyalty program server; and

when the loyalty point instrument is not validated, sending a transaction cancellation to the loyalty program server.

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69. The method of claim 68, further comprising:

receiving customer identification information; and

15 sending a loyalty point adjustment request to add loyalty points stored on the loyalty point instrument to a customer account corresponding to the received customer identification information.

70. The method of claim 68, further comprising:

receiving customer identification information; and

20 sending a loyalty point adjustment request to delete loyalty points from a customer account corresponding to the received customer identification information.

71. The method of claim 70, further comprising:

combining the loyalty points deleted from the customer account to an amount of loyalty points stored on the loyalty point instrument; and

25 using the combined loyalty points to redeem a prize.

72. The method of claim 71, further comprising:

issuing a second loyalty program instrument used to redeem the prize.

5 73. The method of claim 68, wherein the validation site is a gaming machine, a clerk validation terminal, a cashier station, a casino kiosk and a hand-held wireless device.

10 74. The method of claim 68, wherein loyalty program instrument is designed or configured to store one or more of prize information, loyalty point information, an establishment, a location, a bar code, a instrument type, an issue date, a validation number, an issue time, an instrument number, an instrument sequence number and a machine number.

15 75. The method of claim 68, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

20 76. A method of validating a loyalty program instrument at a first property using a loyalty program instrument transaction clearinghouse where the loyalty program instrument was generated at a second property, the method comprising,

receiving a first transaction validation request containing transaction information from the first property wherein the first transaction validation request requests approval of a loyalty program instrument transaction;

25 sending a second transaction validation request to the second property;

receiving a first transaction validation reply from the second property; and

sending a second transaction validation reply to the first property wherein the second transaction validation reply contains transaction information indicating the loyalty program instrument transaction has been approved or has been rejected.

- 5 77. The method of claim 76, wherein the transaction information is selected from the group consisting of a prize information, loyalty point information, an establishment, a location, a bar code, a instrument type, an issue date, a validation number, an issue time, an instrument number, an instrument sequence number and a machine number.

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78. The method of claim 76, further comprising:

when the loyalty point instrument transaction is approved, charging an amount to a property owner.

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79. The method of claim 76, further comprising:

when a loyalty program instrument transaction is approved, storing transaction information to a transaction database.

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80. The method of claim 76, further comprising:

generating a transaction validation reply.

81. The method of claim 76, further comprising:

generating a transaction validation request.

82. The method of claim 76, wherein a first owner of the first property is different from a second owner of the second property.

83. The method of claim 76, wherein a first owner of the first property is
5 the same as a second owner of the second property.

84. The method of claim 76, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

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85. The method of claim 76, wherein the loyalty program instrument validation request is received from a loyalty program server.

86. A gaming machine comprising:

15 a master gaming controller designed or configured to control a game play sequence comprising a presentation of one or more games on the gaming machine;

a memory storing logic causing the master gaming controller to determine an amount of loyalty points accrued between a first gaming event and a
20 second gaming event and to award to a game player some or all of the a loyalty points accrued between the first gaming event and the second gaming event; and

an output mechanism designed or configured to store loyalty point information to a loyalty point instrument wherein the loyalty point information includes awarded loyalty points

25 wherein the loyalty points are awarded to the game player without receiving identification information from the game player.

93. The gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic striped card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

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94. The gaming machine of claim 86, further comprising:

an input mechanism designed or configured to read loyalty point information stored on the loyalty point instrument.

10 95. The gaming machine of claim 94, wherein the input mechanism is a card reader, a bill validator, a wireless interface and a ticket reader.

96. The gaming machine of claim 86, further comprising:

a network interface.

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97. The gaming machine of claim 96, wherein the network interface is used to communicate with one or more gaming devices used to perform loyalty program instrument transactions.

20 98. A loyalty program transaction network in a game playing area, the loyalty program transaction network comprising;

a plurality of loyalty program instrument generation sites designed or configured to award at least loyalty points wherein the loyalty points are stored on loyalty point instruments;

a plurality of loyalty program validation sites designed or configured to validate of loyalty program instruments and to redeem loyalty points for goods and services; and

- 5 one or more loyalty program transaction servers designed or configured to store loyalty program transaction information and to approve loyalty program instrument transactions at the loyalty program validation sites.

- 10 99. The loyalty program transaction network of claim 98, wherein the loyalty program validation sites are selected from the group consisting of a gaming machine, a clerk validation terminal, a cashier station, a casino kiosk and a hand-held wireless device.

- 15 100. The loyalty program transaction network of claim 98, wherein the loyalty program generation sites are selected from the group consisting of a gaming machine, a clerk validation terminal, a cashier station, a casino kiosk and a hand-held wireless device.

- 20 101. The loyalty program transaction network of claim 98, wherein the loyalty program instrument is at least one of a printed ticket, a magnetic card, a room key, a portable wireless device and a smart card.

102. The loyalty program transaction network of claim 98, wherein some of the loyalty program generation sites and some of the loyalty program validation sites are located at different properties.

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103. The loyalty program transaction network of claim 102, further comprising: a loyalty program transaction clearinghouse designed or configured-to

approve loyalty program transactions wherein the loyalty program transactions occur at first property with a loyalty program instrument generated at a second property different from said first property.

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